

COVID-19 testing expansion

To date, COVID-19 has been reported in almost 40 countries however over 95% of these cases were from Mainland China¹.

The details of this update are current as of February 27, 2020. For up-to-date information on countries impacted by COVID-19, refer to <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html> and continue to refer to saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus for updates to Saskatchewan documents.

Currently, the public health risk of COVID-19 remains low within Canada. This risk assessment is continually being revised and will be updated as appropriate.

Over the past week, there has been an increase in cases of COVID-19 in other countries including South Korea, Italy, Iran, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan. Additionally, a recent BC case of COVID-19 was discovered in whom there was no known travel to China and infection is presumed to have occurred in Iran.

The Public Health Agency of Canada, as well as the US Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) continue to update travel recommendations. Current recommendations are that individuals avoid travel to mainland China. Nonessential travel to South Korea is discouraged. Travel to Iran, Italy and Japan is only advised when the traveller practices enhanced precautions. These areas are now considered centres of active disease transmission.

To this end, public health is now recommending that COVID-19 testing be considered for persons with fever, cough, or shortness of breath with any of the following exposure histories:

- i. A history of travel from mainland China within 14 days of symptom onset;
- ii. A history of travel to countries listed in the Government of Canada webpage² within 14 days of symptom onset: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>
- iii. Any person who has had close contact³ with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset; **OR**
- iv. Had close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to the affected area³ within 14 days before they became ill.
- v. If there are circumstances outside of the above that the clinician feels warrants testing for COVID-19, they must advise the local Medical Health Officer that testing is being conducted.

At this time, transit through the airport in any of these countries should not be considered a relevant exposure history. Physicians assessing a client for testing should notify the local Medical Health Officer and inform the patient of the need to self-isolate for a period of 14 days from last exposure or until a negative test result becomes available.

¹ Note that Mainland China excludes Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan

² This defines the “affected areas”. **As of February 27, 2020** includes South Korea, Iran, Northern Italy, Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore.

³ Close contact is defined as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for a prolonged period of time. This can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case **OR** having direct contact with infectious secretions of a case.

The following table provides a guide to isolation, observation and testing recommendations.

	Symptomatic	Asymptomatic
Close contact ⁴ with persons with confirmed COVID-19	Self-isolate ⁵ and test for COVID-19 including respiratory panel	Self-isolate ⁵
Persons returning from the following countries	Symptomatic	Asymptomatic
Level 3 – ESTABLISHED WIDESPREAD TRANSMISSION		
Hubei Province	Self-isolate ⁵ and test for COVID-19 including respiratory panel	Self-isolate ⁵
Mainland China	Self-isolate ⁵ and test for COVID-19 including respiratory panel	Self-monitor ⁶
Level 2 – PERSON TO PERSON SPREAD IN COMMUNITY IN MULTIPLE REGIONS OR WITH UNKNOWN SOURCE		
Northern Italy	Self-isolate ⁵ and test for COVID-19 including respiratory panel	Self-monitor ⁶
Iran	Self-isolate ⁵ and test for COVID-19 including respiratory panel	Self-monitor ⁶
South Korea	Self-isolate ⁵ and test for COVID-19 including respiratory panel	Self-monitor ⁶
Level 1 – PERSON TO PERSON SPREAD IN THE COMMUNITY		
Currently includes Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong.	Patient assessment, if history of close contact, then self-isolate ⁵ and test for COVID-19 including respiratory panel	Self-monitor ⁶

Refer to [How to Collect a Nasopharyngeal Swab](#) for important information on specimen collection, labeling and transport.

⁴ Close contact is generally defined as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for greater than 15 minutes. This can occur while caring for, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area or room with a COVID-19 case **OR** having direct contact with infectious secretions of a case

⁵ Self-isolate means there is sufficient risk that the person may have been infected with COVID-19 but individual is well enough to stay at home; if symptoms are present, they are mild and do not require hospitalization. They should not attend school, work, social, sporting, religious or cultural events or gatherings.

⁶ Self-monitor means the individual does not have restrictions on attending work, school, etc. They will do Daily Active Monitoring of their health for 14 days including taking their temperature twice daily and remain alert for cough or difficulty breathing. If they develop symptoms, they will self-isolate and will contact the MHO via HealthLine 811 for direction. They should have a plan for whom to contact if they develop fever, cough, or difficulty breathing during the self-monitoring period to determine whether medical evaluation is needed.